ML

Dear Paul, 2/8/78

From accounts reaching me it appears that the House assassins have come upon the crisis that was inevitable. I presume this will also mean varying degrees of personal distress within the critical community, with a few, very few exceptions.

The time has come when many if not most of you will be hoping for its rapid demise.

I have several purposes in writing you about this now. I have a few moments before I get into my daily routine of the winter season, exercycling to you'll excuse the expression the morning TV news. Boring as it is with it the exercycling is less boring.

I suppose that beginning with a confession will not hurt. I regret my inability to reach more of you young fogies with what to me was not merely a certain analysis of the com ittee and its prospects and direction - it was, to me, an absolute certainty.

From t e beginning I was of the belief that the Downing effort was a loser. But when I was asked to consult, that I did. I took Jim with me. Together we made an effort to straighten the resolution and the thinking out. I spent time with Tiny and Rick. They came here several times. I did my best. The day the resultion passed the Rules committee Rick asked for another position paper and I did it off the top of the head. Then Bud asked for one and again I dropped everything and did what I could. My certainty that this would not and could not, almost should not succeed did not prevent a real effort.

Then Sprague asked me in. I went, spent the morning with him and others and the afternoon with some of those then present and others. Donovan Gay was at both sessions. He will, I am sure, tell you that I laid out to Sprague exactly what the traps were and what could not work together with what could and would and how it could be done with no money and very little effort - how they could get off to a start that would mean success if they were able to proceed from an initial successful effort. Earlier I had even persuaded Bud of this and Bud opposes almost anything I suggest, normally. By then he was close to desparate, as he was several time later.

I believe that you sent me your position paper and I made comment on it, probably comment that was unwelcime. Please now learn from these experiences.

There came a time when Donovan phoned me and said, to paraphrase, that I am Berlin, the man who remembers the future. They got into real trouble and he phoned just to say that he remembered clearly how I had spelled it all out to Sprague that firsy morning. (I took Jim with me the second time and I'm sure Jim will tell you that we left with the certainty that under Sprague the committee would not succeed and would probably be very hurtful to the acceptance of truth.

Donovan phoned me again, after I had refused two requests to attend the brainstorming session all the rest of you attended. One of his reasons was that he feared the consequences of all the theorizing and wanted a devil's advocate. (I had learned that this does not work from Schweiker. If I forget to return to this and you are interested, ask me. I'll tell you that Jim and Bud will confirm what I'll say.) I told Donovan that if I went there would be hassles and this also would be counterproductive - that if he found that the committee latched onto some nut theory I would help him afterward.

Now Donovan is fired, as Devin was in effect fired, although I suppose the record shows both resigned. I have less concern for the departure of the Tannenbaums and Lehners, who were unsuited to begin with and did bad things. The last rumor is that Fenton is gone. He should not have been there to begin with.

It was clear from the first that the committee even to the minor staff level knew the JFK end was reserved for Mark, who has yet to do a worthwhile thin in itm unless my memory fails me. But I made a very strong effort to help it with t e King end. I gave it to begin with enough to break the case. You can believe me or not, and Bud even did, I could have gotten them off with a total destruction of both official solutions. There came a time, I'm told, when Bud was pressing them, in their great distress, to do what I had repeatedly proposed.

My work in both cases has survived the most rigorous possible testing, in court, with unlimited resources on the other side. You have no idea what it survived in Memphis, over a two week period. You also have no way of realizing that I kidnapped, so to speak, most of the state's rebuttal witnesses as rapidly as they were pulled by surprise, by

emabling what to a remarkable degree, given the hard conditions, Bud and Jim did.

In the middle of our t ird morning of putting on our case Martin Waldron came up to me as said Hal you old bastard, ain't you ashamed of yourself? I asked why. He said for fuckin up the FBI, the state of Tennessee and the County of Shelby.

After I had made it possible for Bud to utterly destroy and then turn around the State's publishing witness, a former US Attorney and Bantam's vice president and general counsel, an authentic expert in publishing and publishing law, the State asked for a recess to decide whether it would put on any more rebuttal witnesses. (It didn't.) On that break he came up again and said, Hal you old bastard, don't you know what overkill is?

These are the realities. But we could do nothing about a phonet liberal judge who had been fixed. I am now onto how he was probably reached. I hope before too many months have passed to establish what I now have reason to believe.

But Lane owned the committee, which was almost certain not to succeed if this had not been the case.

Its offenses against law and decency were such that I had to break with it. I said I would get Sprague and I was at least a major contribution to that. It had to be. Lane as usual is fictionalizing when he claims the CIA did it. I was the source of all those stories except the Star's and I took the initiave with all of them. Those stories were accurate, too.

From these long and painful experiences and having adapted to the fact that I have two illnesses either of which can be fatal I have achieved what may perhaps be called a state of tranquility in all of this. I do not get upset about these developments any more. What appears to have come to pass is only what I expected. It is perhaps better that it comes about as it has, with a focus aimed at Blakey rather than the subject. If the committee continues its victim will be the subject. The subject has been victimized less than it can be, less that I believe it will be if the committee does not wreck itself over the Blakey dissention.

Mark, meanwhile, is loudly whoring around again, not only with the cheap shot by the Flynt operation. One belief is that Gregory was the inspiration for that. But do you need more than the experts to know it is, if we are lucky, only unreal?

I am writing to seek what information you may be able to provide, your own information and reports that reach you, about both the committee and Mark's present operations. I have two purposes, one certain and the other possible.

For sure I want a record for historical purposes. I will never write about this and can't find time for the writing I want to do. The other is to be able to try to guide developments in this disaster. As you may have been able to observe, I have not done this often, only when I believed it necessary. You can look back for yourself and decide whether or not I should have and whether or not I was right.

It appears that one of the major turmoils is over CIA and FBI staff clearances. Merlin saw this and very strongly warned Sprague about it and at the same time showed him a path around this-in October 1966, which was long ago. As he had Rick and Tiny and Bud. It was not necessary and it was fighting on the wrong turf.

I have taken initiatives having nothing to do with the committee that may enable us to do some good things in the future. No time to go into more than one now: I have applied for Flynt's reward, as you know from what I've sent you. You may not see what this can make possible but there is a possibility in it.

By now also perhaps you can see some values in what I believe you recognize as accomplishments in court. They are not yet a dramatic breakthrough but from long and costly and difficult effort I think Jim and I have made very real progress and have reached some people who in time may court. I have reached one of whom you have no inkling, separate from anything in this letter or from anything I've ever told you. (If I can make it possible for Howard to come to this area when his clerkship ends it can make a very important difference. I'm making what effort I can along this line.) I have picked my battleground, their strength, and with Jim's wonderful handling am winning consistently and effectively, as long as you do not evaluate as movies present realities.

We both have too much to do. If I did not think being informed could be important I would not be asking this now. Hope you will. Best wishes,